

Montana State Senate
Judiciary Committee
Helena, Montana

2/1/07

Subject: SB 0318

Senators:

My name is Peter Smith and I have been a resident of this great state since 1991 when we moved our family business (HCR Inc.) to Lewistown from Virginia. My career started in General Aviation back in 1975 and I have been flying and involved in aviation ever since. Just this past summer our eldest daughter Rebecca, received her pilots license and is currently pursuing a career as a flying Wild Life Biologist at the U of M, Missoula. I am the current President of and represent the Montana Pilots Association, Central Hangar.

Like many other individuals in aviation, I am a "grass roots" aviator and spend as much time as possible touring the state from the air. Dropping in on friends and businesses with private strips is the icing on the cake. Thirty one years ago when just a student pilot, I had an engine failure due to fuel contamination and made an emergency landing at a farm airstrip. This drove home the importance of privately owned airfields because when my engine failed I was approximately 25 miles from the nearest commercial airport.

I am fortunate enough to live on 80 acres 5 miles NE of Lewistown and have my own airstrip. One of my neighbors has a Bed and Breakfast and it would be a great selling point if they could advertise "Smithfield airstrip close by". After flying cross country several times for pleasure I know many aviators who like myself would go out of their way for such an adventure. Liability keeps my strip closed to all but a few friends.

When deciding on SB 318 please consider the safety aspects when more airstrips are opened to the public and the economical benefits to small towns like Lewistown.

Thank you for your consideration.

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